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5. A WILDBOAR (*SUS SCROFA*) SHARING WILDDOGS' (*CUON ALPINUS*) KILL

On 10.vi.1977 while going along a game track watching for wilddogs at 0635 hrs. I saw a chital stag with 40-45 cm long horns in velvet running past me followed by a dhole. Before I could get into a cover the dhole saw me and abruptly stopped. Meanwhile I heard a sambar fawn being killed by the rest of the pack inside the nearby scrub. While I was searching for the kill the wild dogs smelt and saw me, growled and ran away. I retreated back climbed a tree and waited for the pack to return.

The pack which I was studying then had 8 adults and 8 six month old pups and I could hear the loud squeaking of the pups, audible even at a distance of 200 metres, from the nearby cover. At 0705 hrs one dhole went to the kill and by 0716 hrs the entire pack was eating. The scrub was dense and from my perch, which was nearly 50 metres away from

the kill, only occasionally was I able to see the dogs eating. The fawn, being a small one, was soon torn into pieces and I could hear the dogs feeding within a radius of 20-30 metres.

At 0740 hrs I saw 3 dogs growling and running away. Worried and irritated that some local villager had come to take away the kill I was about to get down when I saw a medium-sized wild boar with its mane raised, grunting and walking amidst the dogs. The wild boar is a good scavenger on kill remains but I was surprised to see it among the wilddogs.

Here was an instance in which a wildpig, a prey animal of the wilddog, had shared the kill, a fact I verified later while searching for the jaw of the fawn. The sambar fawn could have provided each dog with hardly 1 kg meat and this is very little when compared to the

amount of meat each dog gorges (2.5-3.5 kg) while feeding on a full grown chital or a big sambar fawn. So tolerating a prey species to walk around and allowing it to eat at the kill particularly when the kill was insufficient for all members are worth recording. In the same area on 9.vii.77 Keechanna, my tribal assistant, saw a chital stag in velvet spikes being killed by the pack. He waited till the dogs finished eating and when he was about to go to the kill remains to weigh them and collect the lower jaw, he saw a wild boar making its way through the scrub towards the kill. The dogs returning from the kill circled around the boar for some time and then moved away. These observations may suggest that once the 'killing or hunting effort' of the wild dog was over the prey animals may be immune to the wild dogs' predation for quite some time.

Earlier reports record jackals and Hyenas being ignored (Davidar 1975) probably by the

existence of a 'blood-brotherhood bar' as Brander (1931) puts it. R. C. Morris (as reported in Burton 1940) has observed a pack of wild dogs, obviously well-fed, lying about on a grass hill-top while sambar walked, tails stiffly erect, right up to them. Apart from eyeing the deer lazily the dogs did not stir. On the evening of 2.viii.77 I saw an alarmed yearling sambar doe walk past through a single file of 4 dogs, part of the pack of 15, which 10 minutes later killed a prime adult chital doe. Earlier that day in the morning the pack had killed a prime adult chital stag with 38 cm long hard antlers but tribals took away the kill before the dogs could consume it fully. The pack, being 15 in number, was sufficiently strong to kill the sambar. Yet they preferred and killed a smaller possibly an already weakened animal. All these indicate that wild dogs though they have the courage and capacity are not wanton killers.

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6. BIRD MIGRATION ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS

It would be an interesting and instructive exercise to have a collection made of all bird migration records across the Himalayas. We may possibly gain considerable insight into the role of the Himalayas as a barrier or otherwise to birds winging their way to and from temperate Asia.

Here are two observations by myself which might be worth recording:

In the summer of 1968, I was crossing the Rohtang Pass at the head of the Kulu Valley (32/30°N, 72°E). May tends to be rather an unsettled month with sudden thunder storms gathering up on the snowy mountains. On the